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## Changes in the Governance System for Higher Education in Peru to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century

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**Abstract:** The competition in markets, the distribution of limited resources based on productivity and performance, and the efficient management of universities are changing the criteria of trust and legitimacy of the educational system in Peru. Universities are perceived more as institutions of the public sector, while the services they offer must rather contribute to the modernization of the emerging society and the knowledge economy. Higher Education reforms - initiated in the 1980s - have been inspired by the successful university organizations that have managed to change their governance and addressed to transform certain bureaucratic institutions into organizations capable of playing active role in this global competition for resources and best talent. Within this context, Peruvian universities are facing two major challenges: adapting themselves to new global perspectives and being able to develop a better response to society demands, needs and expectations. This article proposes a model of governance system for higher education in Peru that gives a comprehensive solution to these challenges, allowing dealing with the problems of universities for their development and inclusion within the global trends. For this purpose, a holistic and qualitative methodologic approach was developed, considering an integrated method which considered educational reality as a whole, understanding its facts, components and elements that affects its outcomes. It is proposed to define a policy for university education in Peru that permeates society, by changing the planning model from a social reform model to a policy analysis model, where the Peruvian State acts as sole responsible for responding to the demanding society as its legal representative complemented with some external and independent bodies that define the basis of best practice, as it is being done in many university models worldwide.

**Keywords:** University, Planning, University reform, Governance, Government, Peru.

### 1. Introduction

Global trend in higher education is geared towards the real integration of education with society and its development. Within this context, a change in the teaching role and duties, new evaluation proposals, a competency-based approach, among others, are required (Blanco Valdés, 2013), marked by the permanent challenge of delivering quality education, internationalization and globalization, which may not be effective and solid without establishing strategies, setting priorities, selecting and meeting teaching and research objectives and, in general, without adjusting its structures and organization to adapt to a changing environment. For such reasons, institutional government and management methods are critical (Santiago *et al.*, 2008).

In times when the extent, intensity and speed of changes in the environment within which universities develop threaten to exceed their reaction and adaptation capabilities, they run the risk of going into crisis, losing their competitive position, and disappearing. These changes force institutions to redesign their government and management structures and procedures in order to increase their strategic capabilities with respect to the external environment (Brunner, 2011).

This challenge has been addressed in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) seeking to establish criteria and standards to promote an increased mobility of professors and students, which has generated new political structures for the universities through management delegation and decision making from a State level to external (independent) agencies which guarantee the quality of the education being delivered (Andradas Heranz and González García, 2012).

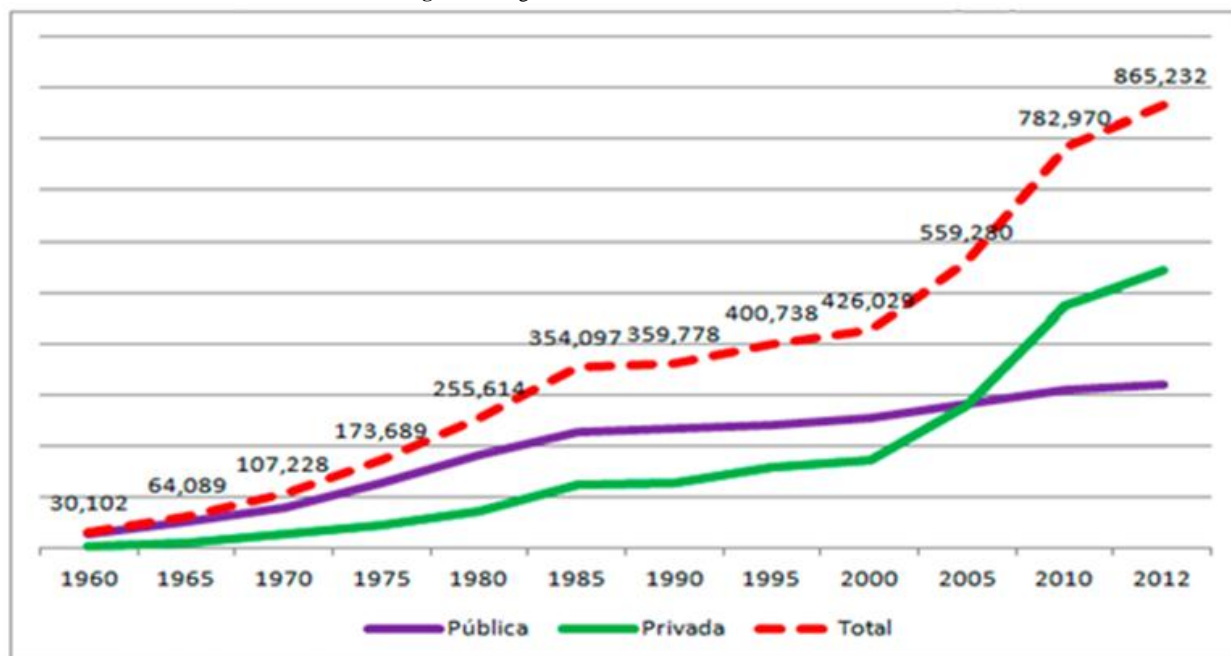
These changes of university higher education worldwide are being experienced in Peru, and the Peruvian university model is no exception.

Originally, universities in Peru arise as an extension of the Spanish model (Rodríguez, 1972), with a planning model having a predominant domain of social reform. Since 1983, a State control delegation is generated, thus

giving to the National Assembly of Rectors (ANR<sup>1</sup> in Spanish) responsibility over universities, granting more autonomy to universities (University Act No. 23733 dated 1983, effective until June 2014).

In the 80s as well an expansion process of Peruvian university higher education began. However, only after year 2000 is evidenced that the university enrollment growth took off, maintaining a constant upward trend, with a more noticeable increase in private education since 2005 as shown in Figure 1. This explosive growth of university enrollment was not an incidental issue. It was a decision of the Peruvian Government with the Decree Law No. 882 dated 1996, through which it releases the education market by enabling universities to make a profit in order to attract private investment in the educational service.

Figure-1. Higher Education Enrollment. 1960-2012



Source: <http://revistaideele.com/ideele/sites/default/files/archivos/cuadro241.jpg>

For Cuenca Pareja (2014), there are three hypotheses behind Decree Law No. 882. First, private sector participation would allow expanding the offer and university coverage. Second, as a result of the first hypothesis, access to higher education would be more democratic; i.e., more young people from all economic strata would study at the university. Finally, it was assumed that the market would be an effective regulator of quality of this expanded and democratized service.

However, in practice, this expansionist phenomenon has caused an imbalance within the university quality systems (Rojas-Reverde, 2007), thus generating consistency problems with respect to proliferation of careers with low labor demand (Yamada, 2014). Hence, explanations for this phenomenon have been focused mainly on the supply and demand model specific to the economics field (De los Ríos *et al.*, 2002) and in the production of legal rules and provisions, from both the legal and political fields, which are fostering the emergence of new universities. Between 1960 and 1985, public universities were created gradually until the implementation of coverage of one university by geographical department in Peru was almost reached. On the other side, private universities were created at the beginning of this period and remain at 10 universities until the mid-1980s (Adaniya and Timana, 2000; Álvarez and Pérez, 2011; ANR, 2002;2003;2005a;2005b;2005c;2007;2013; Neave, 2004), with the new decree reaching a total of 140 universities in 2013 (INEI - II University National Census, 2010; National Assembly of Rectors, 2013). This entire transformation of higher education has led to an unbalanced and low-quality university system (Gazzola and Didriksson, 2008).

Thus, Peruvian universities have prioritized reforms based on market, budget cuts, considering students as "consumers", and on the context of new government bodies which are directed or conditioned by stakeholders (external agents) where representative democracy of university community members is very small (when it does not disappear), where self-organization should be considered, strengthening internationalization, accountability and relationship with stakeholders (Vallespín Pérez, 2013).<sup>2</sup>

At the present time, Peruvian Government has become aware of this situation, and has created instruments, laws, and institutions such as the National System of Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of Educational

<sup>1</sup> Peruvian public organization which involved all Deans and Chancellors (highest authority) from public and private universities in the country, with the aim of studying, coordinating and guiding university activities in Peru, intended to strengthen the economic and academic aspects of universities and the fulfillment of their responsibility with the national community (Article 92 of University Act No. 23733 dated 1983-2014).

<sup>2</sup> For a comparative and comprehensive analysis of all three proposals, which are not absolutely exclusive among them, see: Bleiklie *et al.* (2012). ; De Boer *et al.* (2012) ; Ferlie *et al.* (2012) ; and Kehm (2012a).

Quality (SINEACE in Spanish), the National Superintendence of University Education (SUNEDU in Spanish), as well as enactment of the new University Act No. 30220, the creation of for the process of obtaining professional degrees with the redefinition of the ANR's role in order to respond to the quality requirements of the Peruvian society.

The proposed methodology for this research is qualitative, considering reality analysis as a whole, without reducing it to its integral parts, and interpreting the facts, aiming to understand the variables involved.

## **2. Change of Governance Model in the Peruvian University System**

Considering the context described above, any answer to the problems related to quality, relevance, and internationalization of university education should come from the establishment of a national educational policy that, in any case, respects the university autonomy by combining the general interests of society and accountability as key elements (Kehm, 2011).

Research on governance in university systems related to the decision-making structures, their processes and objectives, evidence the relevance of the form of leadership and administrative structure in higher education institutions, especially considering the participation of interested parties, actors, or internal or external stakeholders in decision-making processes.

In the current context, the new University Act No. 30220 enacted on July 9, 2014, the reorganization of the SINEACE, and the creation of the SUNEDU are intended to address the university crisis focused on three main aspects considered as the basis for a reform. First, the State assumes the control of educational policies at all levels of education. This is essential since the development of the country requires alignment of educational policies. A nation educational project not only offers clear guidance as to where to go, but also looks for mechanisms that allow articulating the entire educational system as needed. The control of educational policies implies leadership in the conduct of the educational system and not «telling what universities should teach» (Cuenca Pareja, 2014).

The second aspect is to install a quality regulation mechanism that, along with the restructuring of other existing mechanisms, should lay the foundations for families and students to have the public guarantee that the services offered, regardless of their particular characteristics, have a minimum common quality. The Act formulates the regulation of quality through the creation of SUNEDU. This autonomous institution is responsible for the first step of a quality assurance system; i.e., to authorize the operation of programs and institutions based on quality standards and not, as it has been so far, based on the submission of documentation. The Act also requires SINEACE<sup>3</sup> reorganization in order to adjust accreditation processes to effectively contribute to quality assurance.

A third aspect that the act reaffirms, is that a university is a place for knowledge-building based on research and comprehensive training. The purposes, structure and organization, graduate options, faculty characteristics, mandatory nature of general studies, etc. indicate that academic reflection is the core articulator of university life.

The new University Act also stresses the role of the State as guarantor of quality, directly involving the authentic actors contained in the Ministry of Education: universities, professional associations, entrepreneurs and the civil society, by trying to bring closer expert knowledge and decision-making knowledge. Thus, such external agents as SUNEDU and SINEACE become an element of support, external to the Ministry of Education, paying special attention to the justification of the origin of the data provided by the external evaluation team, as well as to the logic of the processes established for its performance (Cazorla, 2007).

Given that any change, in general, generates suspicion and mistrust, the scope of universities is not oblivious to this situation. However, when convenience and necessity arises, it is necessary to anticipate the impositions that could come from outside of the university world, assuming the responsibility of piloting modifications that will lead to a new governance model from the university community itself and, more specifically, from their bodies of representation and government (Vallespín Pérez, 2013).

## **3. Planning for University Higher Education Governance in Peru**

The Peruvian Government has become aware of the failure in and low quality of the Peruvian university system, but must also realize that it should be prepared to deal with the global trends and demands of university education.

In this current scenario, a legislative model for higher education in Peru is proposed. With institutions such as SUNEDU and SINEACE, it becomes questionable whether these changes allow seeing a change in the form of governance for university education in Peru.

The proposal seeks to control the problems that have arisen, such as the expansion of universities and the low quality of services, and to allow responding to global trends. Therefore, two dimensions are unified in the governance model: a political dimension that allows the State control for decision-making, and a qualitative dimension to guarantee the quality, so that the educational policy can be oriented towards the four specific objectives of the model (see Figure 2).

It is then stated that a governance model that, on the one hand, responds to the problems of universities with a political structure of control with the new legislation - causes a change from a fully decentralized bottom-up model integrated with the full autonomy of universities to a model of policy analysis, not only centralizing the decision

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<sup>3</sup> Bill No. 4534/2014-PE. Act for the creation of the Peruvian Board of Higher Education Accreditation (COPAES), entity that will replace and take over the duties of the National System of Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of Educational Quality (SINEACE).

from top to bottom but also based on specialized agencies such as SUNEDU and SINEACE as external consulting agents that guarantee the quality, in such a way as to take into consideration the opinion of those affected by the decision making from the top (as a political dimension) with a common objective: to improve the quality of the Peruvian university higher education in order to enhance employability and the mobility of citizens, as well as the international competitiveness of university higher education in Peru.

The proposed approach would contribute to the qualitative dimension, given that an educational policy must be set at the highest political level, so that it can respond to the demands of society with a common goal for the university system, with specific lines of action and a timeline for their implementation which allows us to address global trends and demands.

The lines of action will be defined in four specific objectives: skills (generic and specific of thematic areas)-, teaching approaches; learning and evaluation; academic credits, and quality of programs. Although these are of different nature, they seek to respond more effectively to the problems of the Peruvian universities as a result of research (Chiyón *et al.*, 2011). Considering that their implementation is intended to clarify and achieve relevant changes of global competitiveness, such as the mobility of professors and students, strengthen a research university, a new teaching profile, etc., the objective is to become a university that solves the real problems of society, as the EHEA is currently doing and what U.S. universities have been doing since always (3<sup>rd</sup> International Meeting of Rectors - UNIVERSIA, 2014)<sup>4</sup>.

Quality is a fundamental element in building a higher education model, it is the basis and foundation for the recognition and comparability of qualifications and therefore, is considered an aspect of vital importance (CADE. For Education 2014)<sup>5</sup>. To this end, universities should develop quality assurance systems and certification and accreditation mechanisms. Accreditation in the field of education is an issue that is only just being addressed in Peru by the competent education authorities through SUNEDU and SINEACE which, among other functions, will be responsible for setting the standards, criteria and indicators for evaluation and accreditation, fundamental for the quality of the competency-based curriculum design; for this reason, it should be developed with the active participation of deaneries, departments and research groups by centers or schools, participating in projects for innovation in the teaching methodology, pilot programs or strategic plans; not only for the design and academic accreditation but also for the promotion of the mobility of teachers, students exchange, and actions that are essential to ensure quality (Louvel, 2013).

The proposed governance model seeks to promote that the system reaches its economic and social relevance so that the specific objectives in terms of teaching, research and extension respond to the demands of society, taking full advantage of the resources that society puts in their hands, which will involve analyzing the reforms of the Government and their impact in university policies, with special attention to quality, innovation, mobility, and subsidy (Chiyón *et al.*, 2012).

In addition to these four specific objectives, the model set the lines of action for the modernization of university higher education, with its roots in the research of the reality of Peruvian universities, their challenges and the benchmarking of what is being done in worldwide, taking the change of the Spanish model as best practice in the implementation of the specific objectives of the Bologna Process, as stated in the OECD (2009).

As a result of the EHEA implementation, universities in Spain have begun to measure the impact of university in society (Pastor *et al.*, 2006), taking the United States system as model, as they have been doing for many years as research university (Keith, 2008)<sup>6</sup>. While universities as a whole have a very important role in the development of the country, it should not be forgotten that the focal point of university activity is creation and transmission of knowledge. This knowledge creation should be measured by standards accepted at a national and international level, although they are discussions on this matter. They must be clear, even if they are not fixed in all fields of knowledge, transmission should consider publications in the form of books and articles in publishing agencies and journals of impact, as well as patents records (at a national and continental level, or in partnership and fund-raising from industry, etc.). To the extent that publications are becoming more competitive (subject to revisions and anonymous criticisms of peers) and that patents are also more competitive (registered at national or international level), the creation of knowledge by the university will be carried out with greater assurance.

Furthermore, the transmission of knowledge begins with its diffusion to students and evolves towards its transference to private companies, so that they create new products and can compete with those produced in other countries. The creation of these products may require a highly qualified labor force, and insofar as this qualification is greater, to the extent that a given country or region are capable of producing products with higher value-added, their competitiveness will also be greater and will produce more wealth. Success in the social distribution of such wealth will make the well-being of the region also higher<sup>7</sup>. At the end, the university institution will be located in the middle of the whole process.

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<sup>4</sup> III ENCUESTRO INTERNACIONAL DE RECTORES UNIVERSIA (THIRD INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF UNIVERSIA RECTORS). "The University of the 21st Century: a reflection from Latin America." July 27, 28 and 29, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> CADE. For Higher Education, August 12, 13, 14, 2014.

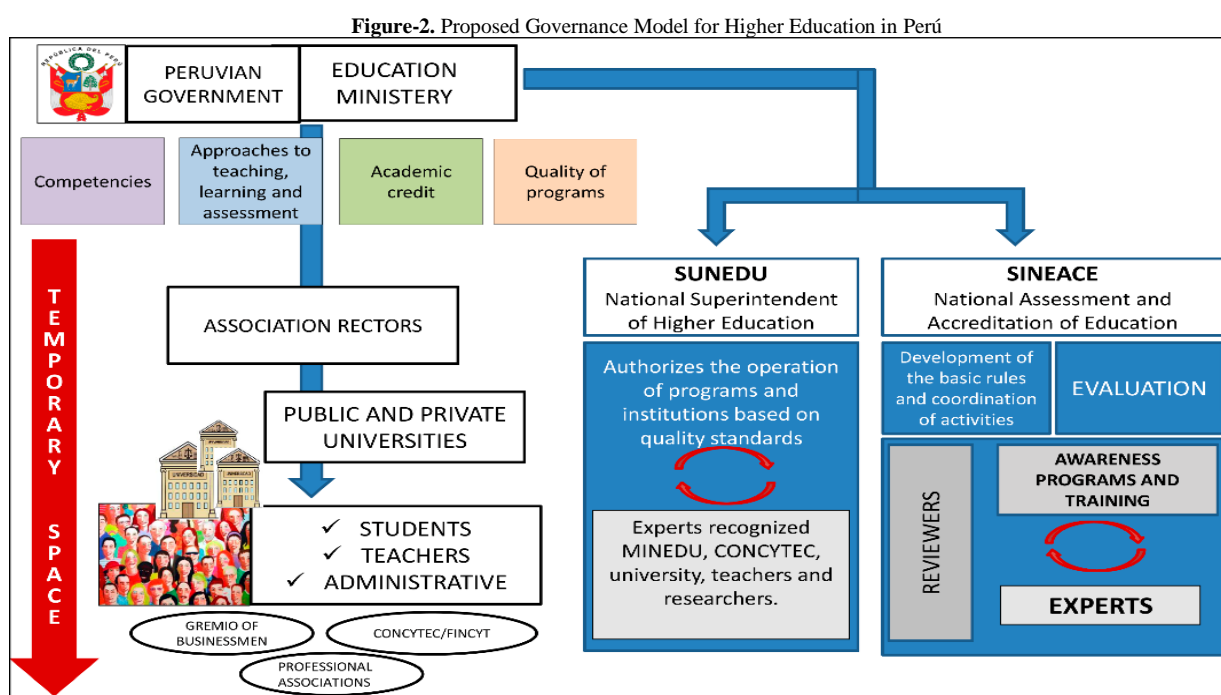
<sup>6</sup> See also Appleseed (2003) and the comments of Freeland (2005) and more recently, OECD (2010). In addition, opposite arguments in Wolf (2002).

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO World Report (2005). Towards knowledge societies.



Each one of the objectives considered in the university model, must be implemented by SINEACE and SUNEDU, so that universities respond to the interests of the Peruvian society, defining their own methodology to carry out evaluation, in both the internal and external assurance of quality. The accreditation model must be a quality assurance system, that is, the regulation of quality as a first step, then an adjustment of processes that must be based on a systemic approach, applying the “plan-do-check-act” cycle to each one of the processes involved. The model must be designed in such a way that it becomes an instrument for quality improvement and assurance and, at the same time, for a better control of the processes that are implemented for accreditation. Beyond a typical logic of a rational bureaucracy, which aims at meeting certain “formats”, emphasis should be put on the university model, the own process of joint work, and the continued review of the planning done on the basis of its impact on practical development, which takes place voluntarily (see Figure 2).

This is how the proposal considers that the Peruvian Government regains control of the educational policy and of quality, thus constituting a planning model of policy analysis complemented with external agencies as quality advisors. In order to achieve the quality aim, it is required to analyze the ANR’s role and university autonomy. Within this framework, it is reconsidered how actors remain for governance to achieve a university education that responds to the demands of higher education projects in the rest of the world based on the conceptual aspects analyzed and according to Peruvian reality (Chiyón *et al.*, 2012).



Source: elaborated by the authors, 2014

The Government, as the highest political level, should assume the control of educational policies at all levels of education through a specialized technical public body attached to the Ministry of Education, with technical, economic and administrative autonomy, aimed at regulating, coordinating and supervising the activity of universities. This public body returns an university education policy on which the political power makes the decision to approve through the legislative and the executive branches. Once the actions that respond to a particular policy have been taken, you can look back and confirm if these actions were taken in accordance with the criteria and the objectives designed. The Government, through this public body, tries to respond to the expectations of a population who benefit from these actions, insofar as specialists from the education sector are involved, representatives of the Ministry of Education, representatives of national universities, private universities, as well as of the civil society. The proposed model responds, inescapably, to a political decision-making process on criteria and objectives subject to political analysis.

Thus, the change in the political structure of the model for university higher education in Peru is based on the concept of two levels, top-down and with a change to the side in parallel; which means the permeation of public policies through independent bodies of specialists who lay the foundations of the practice. This detour is preserved with the creation of SUNEDU and SINEACE that establish the criteria, guidelines, and procedures to ensure the quality of teaching leading to the Peruvian official degrees of undergraduate and graduate studies, which should be examined considering both the distinctive characteristics of higher education in Peru and the process of incorporation into other university systems in the world. The quality assurance processes are based on the trust that is established between university, students and society. By entering a particular teaching, a student relies on the quality of the program of studies of the university, on the educational competence of professors, on the adequacy of the general services he/she receives, and on the adequacy of facilities, among other things.

SUNEDU is responsible for the licensing for the university education service, licensing being understood as the procedure aimed at verifying that the basic quality conditions to provide the university higher education service and

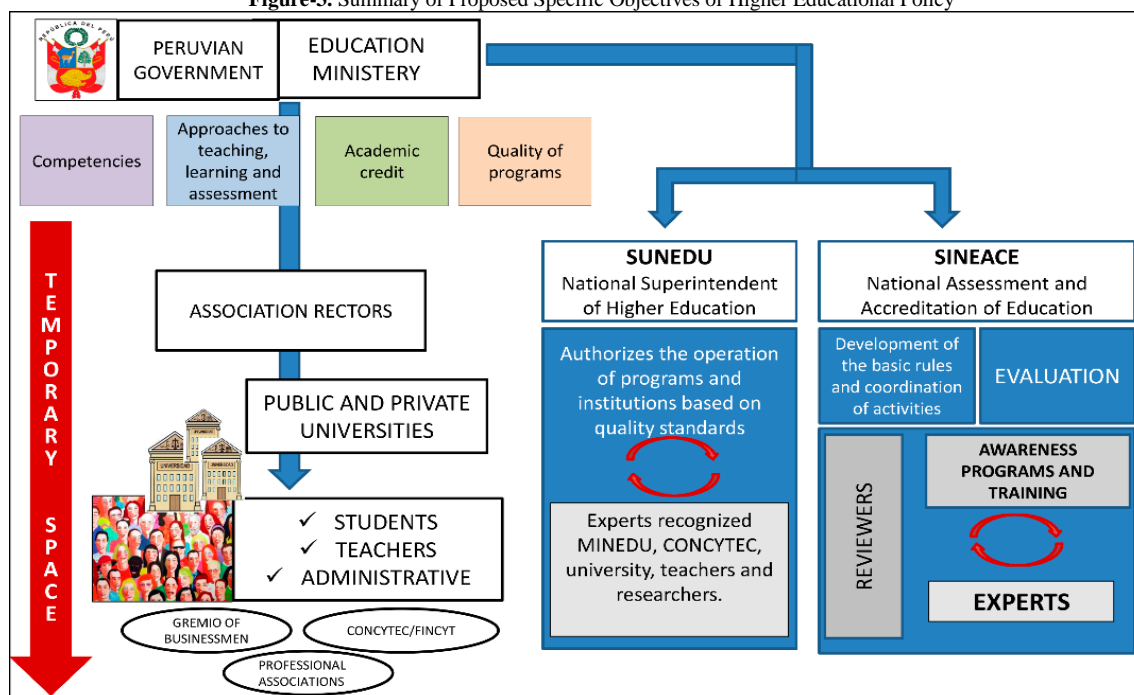
authorize its operation are met. The authorization granted through the licensing by SUNEDU is temporary and renewable, and it shall be valid for six years at least. Therefore, it will be the central authority for the licensing and supervision of the educational service conditions at university higher level and, for this reason, it issues regulations and establishes procedures to ensure compliance with the public policies of the education sector in matters that fall within its competence.

SINEACE considers accreditation to be an element of information of great importance, since it is used to provide information to the student and the society in general about the official value of the degree obtained and the guarantee that the teaching quality is externally reviewed from time to time by an independent agency. The decisions derived from an accreditation process are important because they can be used to make other decisions of a different nature. Thus, the results of this accreditation process are configured as a new differentiating element within the university system, which could be used as one more criterion in different financing processes by objectives or in professional associations, while a negative decision has opposite consequences.

The ANR is reconsidered under the new legislation. The rectors of public and private universities are free to create an Association or Council of Rectors, the purposes of which are the study, coordination and general orientation of university activities in the country, as well as its economic strength and its responsibility with the national community, as set forth in the new University Act. This rectors' association is important and must be a non-profit association made up of a total of 140 universities: 51 public and 89 private. It must be the main interlocutor of universities with the Government and play a key role in all regulatory developments that affect the university higher education of our country. It should also promote initiatives of various kinds in order to foster relations with the productive and social network, institutional relations, both national and international, and work to add value to the Peruvian universities.

A change is proposed for universities, which is not only curricular, organizational, technical, or administrative, but first and foremost a proposal of global change, of cultural nature, which has an impact on curriculum, organizational and technical plans, as well as in the administrative field. Making an impact on how to develop teaching at the university, and trying to change it, involves affecting the heritage and acquired knowledge of each professor, which affects a complex of representations made and deeply rooted throughout the vital experience of many agents. According to (Kehm, 2012b), more institutional autonomy has been given to universities in order to adapt to these new perspectives, and for them to acquire more capacity to respond to the demands, needs, and expectations of society. Universities increasingly respond to the public sector, and the services offered must contribute to the modernization agenda of emerging societies and economies of knowledge (see Figure 3).

Figure-3. Summary of Proposed Specific Objectives of Higher Educational Policy



Source: elaborated by the authors, 2014

The purpose is that the governance of universities is aimed at transforming bureaucratic institutions into corporate institutions, capable of playing the role of actors in this global competition for resources and the best talent, assuming that when a change occurs, it must be based on the professionalism of agents, the professional qualities and behaviors that are linked to it, and any type of restructuring related to it; it is complex to decide when it has already been accomplished. Hence the most effective and advisable strategies are those insisting on the responsibility of the participant agents themselves, providing them with support, gathering evidence of progress through tools that allow documenting it and promoting its evaluation, and inspiring successive decisions and steps to be taken (Enders, 2004).

### 3.1. Validation of the Proposed Model

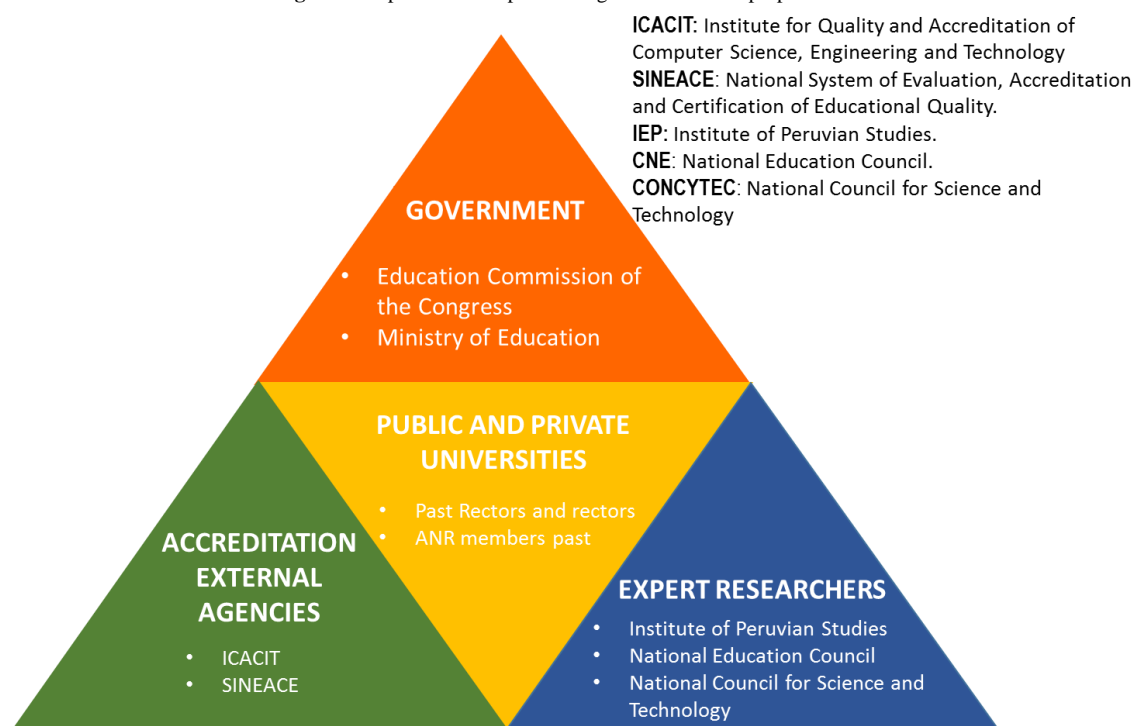
The proposed model was validated through a panel of experts, who went through a qualitative interview (see Figure 4), whose answers were used to make a triangulation.

All experts agree that the Peruvian Government must fulfill its role as established in the Political Constitution of Peru, validating the proposal in the sense that decisions come from the highest level in the structure of the Policy Analysis, and that there is a need to revise the university higher education policy.

Experts agree that implementation of this education policy should be assessed and controlled in universities through external agencies with technical, economic and administrative autonomy, which effectively contributes as an instrument for improvement and information. They recognize the work that the SINEACE has been performing; recognize that the most important thing is that everything is aligned to a common objective for the university system with specific lines of action. This external accreditation body validates the model proposed in the sense that it will implement the education policy and then look back and confirm whether they were made in accordance with the criteria and objectives designed. They agree that, once the university education policy has been approved, SUNEDU (licensing) and SINEACE (accreditation) will implement in their models the four specific objectives proposed in the article, which leads the Peruvian university system to become the main actor in the sustainable development of society.

Furthermore, results of the interviews agree on the reconsideration of the ANR, which should be a coordination body that responds to the interests of universities. The new ANR should be a counseling institution, a consulting body aware of the sector's needs as a way of bringing the expert knowledge closer to decision-making knowledge. The new ANR must fulfill the role established by the new University Act, must look after the interests of universities, since rectors know best what universities do. They should act as advisors and opinion leaders, who should always be consulted because they know their role, not for powers delegated by the Government, but for opinion due to their experience.

**Figure-4.** Expert Panel Map according to Roles within proposed model



**Source:** compilations by the authors based on experts interviews, 2014

The majority agrees that accreditation of undergraduate, graduate and institutional studies should be voluntary, in the sense that degrees on behalf of the nation should be given in the careers that are externally accredited. In those careers that decide not to be accredited degrees on behalf of their institutions should be given; the model proposes that all universities freely commit to carry out self-assessments, and then conduct an external evaluation. With the new University Act, accreditation will be at a second level, the first level will be referred to the mandatory licensing and a model of the quality system, in such a way that universities comply with a minimum for their operation.

Regarding the research, development and innovation, the results agree on the fact that it should be given at graduate level (master and PhD); this does not imply that good undergraduate research cannot be done, but the main function of undergraduate studies is the professional training. To the extent that the quality of graduate programs is enhanced through external accreditation, (I+D+i) will be implemented in their plans, as well as the change of the teaching profile, strongly engaging in solving the real problems of society. Furthermore, in order to promote research, development and innovation, public funds from and on royalties should be invested, as well as the private

financing of universities, whether national or private, with the graduate studies accredited as a way of reward and guarantee for money investment control and as a way to increase the competitiveness of the public and private universities.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The developed analysis and proposal allow concluding that, in the current context of Peruvian universities and its current challenges, it is easy to adapt to a governance model that meets the global demands of university education, because there is a new legislation that centralizes in the Government the decisions on educational policies with independent external institutions of specialists who guarantee the quality of university education in parallel, thus creating a political structure that guides educational policies and the objectives for them to provide a comprehensive solution to the problems of the Peruvian university education.

The success and sustainability of the model for university higher education in Peru depends on, to a large extent, the responsibility of the Peruvian Government, in such a way that the Legislative and the Executive Branches make the decisions necessary for the governance of universities. In that sense, an educational policy with a common goal for the university system is necessary, with a timetable for the change, as well as lines of action (specified objectives) that lead Peruvian universities to meet the quality requirements, not only nationwide but worldwide. For this educational policy to permeate the society, it is necessary to change the model of planning and management of the university system: from a social reform model to a policy analysis model. A top-down model where the Peruvian Government acts as the sole responsible for responding to the demanding society as its legal representative and to the side with external and independent agencies that collect the educational policy issued by the Government to lay the foundations of practice, as it is being done in many university models in the world, where the role of an association of rectors is to negotiate with the Government and reach a consensus with SUNEDU and SINEACE on the implementation of the educational policy in universities.

A contribution to the improvement of planning, is the political structure at various levels. This concept of government at several levels, top-down and to the side has been extended and comprises phenomena such as internationalization and globalization. The principles of the Policy Analysis model for Peruvian universities, which is based on specialized agencies that work in parallel with consulting technicians who are those who finally ensure quality, such as SUNEDU and SINEACE, include one of the main problems of Peruvian universities, which is accreditation, quality certification and assessment.

The proposed model for Peruvian university higher education is a complete view of the requirements of an educational policy that allows improving the governance of the Peruvian University System, distinguished by improvements for the efficiency and relevance of university higher education in society and in the economy, and above all for the competitiveness of each university worldwide. This process of change for the Peruvian university system is a responsibility, as a goal, of the government of universities, provided that they are free to act in order to enhance their role in society with criteria and indicators that can be evaluated independently.

The new University Act sets out framework guidelines in the operation of universities, giving freedom for universities to design their undergraduate and graduate degrees. This model proposes that, once the university educational policy has been approved, universities, through their rectors, supported by SUNEDU and SINEACE, conduct studies and practical assumptions for the design of undergraduate and graduate programs adjusted to the accreditation model. It is a non-binding proposal, with value as a tool for reflection, which would be submitted to the Ministry of Education for their information and consideration.

The modernization process of university higher education and research (in the sense of I+D+i) in Peru is a social and economic requirement for the future well-being of the population and the country, not a mere submission to an educational policy. These are realities that have to do with the need to increase the social relevance of what is studied and researched, the efficiency of university studies, the effective autonomy of universities and its differentiation, as well as their recognition and prestige in Peru and worldwide. These aspects are proposed by the Peruvian university higher education model.

Due to the complexity of the model, the validation has been structured in three parts, from which we can conclude the following: first, the progress made in Peru in terms of university higher education. Second, the current lines of work that will allow the (mandatory) licensing and external accreditation (voluntary) that ensure the quality of higher education in Peru with a new University Act that contemplates the role of the Government as a control body without this affecting the university autonomy. Finally, the third part is through the knowledge from expert opinion reports resulting from the twelve qualitative interviews showing consistency with the results under the three aspects of validation and reliability.

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